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SUBJECT: EASTERN DRC NOTES - APRIL 9; FARDC ABUSES INCREASING

¶1. (U) The items contained in this report consist principally of spot information from various sources. This report is not exhaustive, nor can all the information contained therein be confirmed at this time.

FARDC Abuses Increasing

¶2. (SBU) Most of the rank and file of the FARDC in the Kivus have not been paid (many in three months) and there has been an increase in FARDC abuses as a result. MONUC, diplomatic and NGO sources report incidents of looting, roadblocks and displacement of populations in several towns in North and South Kivu. While MONUC has been feeding FARDC soldiers in some locations and is preparing to transport 13 tons of food to Kindu to support a deployment of 2,500 FARDC troops there, as unpaid FARDC soldiers deploy to more remote locations, command and control loosens, increasing the army's tendency to prey on the local population.

¶3. (SBU) MONUC reports that the families of FARDC troops who recently deployed to Kindu are at the Goma airport, expecting to follow along or be fed by MONUC. On the evening of April 2, hundreds of these women protested outside of MONUC headquarters, across the street from the airport. MONUC sources told us on April 3 that their complaints should be directed to the FARDC, which sometimes takes responsibility for transporting soldiers' families, but has declined to do so for the current operation.

¶4. (SBU) Much further north, Oxfam had to halt a food distribution in Lubero when angry wives of FARDC troops disrupted the distribution, demanding to be included. NGO sources claim some people are nervous about accepting food distributions, fearful that the food will attract hungry (and potentially deadly) FARDC soldiers.

¶5. (SBU) A PARECO Major has threatened to pull 400 fighters out of the FARDC unless salaries are paid. Ex-CNDP fighters are also grumbling. A senior GDRC military source told us April 3 that the GDRC has provided money to pay the regular troops of the FARDC, but not enough for all the newly integrated soldiers. Rather than pay some and leave some without their salaries, the FARDC decided to postpone payments for entire integrated units. Meanwhile, a FARDC unit is touring North Kivu in a hurried effort to get integrated troops registered and identification issued.

¶6. (SBU) NGO's report that some roads are virtually off-limits because of the dangers of FARDC robbery and random banditry. Regions to the west of Masisi and south of Lubero are especially troublesome. An International Rescue Committee (IRC) source told us that their vehicles have been stopped and robbed by armed men in uniform three times in the past two weeks. At least four other NGO's have also been hit. However, unpaid FARDC soldiers are not the only threat. Deprived in many places of traditional sources of income due to the recent joint operation, the FDLR has turned to banditry, looting and robbing towns and travelers. Other armed

militias and criminal elements have become more active as well. NGO's are, however, reluctant to accept MONUC escorts because MONUC is a declared enemy of the FDLR and the NGO's operate in FDLR areas. They fear close identification with MONUC would make them targets. Additionally, a number of NGO's have written a letter to the North Kivu Governor urging him to address the problem of FARDC abuses.

¶17. (SBU) The UK Department for International Development has several thousand tents left over from a prior project and is willing to distribute them to the FARDC. A UK/Dutch team is currently in Goma to determine priority areas. A UK source told us that the tents would most likely go to Rutshuru and Masisi, where the lack of adequate shelter threatens the integration of the CNDP into the FARDC (Note: Deployed FARDC troops in the Kivus must sometimes make their own shelter using little more than saplings and leaves. End note.).

¶18. (SBU) Comment: The GDRC's failure to pay salaries puts the whole integration exercise as well as Operation Kimia II at serious risk. Rebels and militias who chose to join the FARDC are reconsidering their decision. It is quite unlikely that FARDC troops will implement operations against the FDLR if they remain unpaid. One source with extensive military contacts told us, however, that the FARDC approach may be deliberate. Commanders pocket much of the payroll, and then "turn loose" the rank and file to make their own way by preying on the population. End comment.

Integration and Conflict

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¶19. (SBU) MONUC sources in Pinga report that PARECO contacts have told them an additional 715 of their fighters want to integrate into the FARDC. The PARECO sources also reported that "General" Ntasibanga, who has threatened Pinga, has only 30 men under his command.

¶110. (SBU) The FDLR killed a village chief in Chirebe (north of Bunyakiri) for unknown reasons. The rebels also set up a roadblock in Kanga, causing many locals to flee the area. Near Bukavu, ex-CNDP fighters were seen patrolling in the Kahuzi Biega National Park in a formed unit (Note: Ex-CNDP fighters within the FARDC are proud of their past affiliation, and often retain some part of their former camouflage uniform to distinguish them from regular FARDC. End note).

¶111. (SBU) A Dutch diplomat who recently traveled to Lubero described an emerging humanitarian crisis in the area. He said local NGO's claim that 150,000 - 300,000 IDP's are pouring into the region from the west, due to FDLR retaliations and FARDC looting. Many of these IDP's migrated west over the past ten years from the crowded areas around Lubero, so when they are uprooted they return to the homes of family and friends, rather than to IDP camps. This makes it difficult for NGO's to identify and assist them.

¶112. (SBU) Comment: Recent military activity has stirred up hornets' nests in many parts of the Kivus. Unpaid FARDC, rushed integration, and plans for further offenses against the FDLR contribute to the volatile situation. Most sources agree that gains have been achieved against the FDLR, but a small though increasing number are questioning whether it was worth the cost. End comment.

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